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A-ONE #0720   05/13/05

    ~ AOL Talks "Web 2.0"!   ~ People Are Talking!   ~ Free E-mail On AOL!

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      ~ Power Outage Hits eBay ~ New XaAES Development! ~ New Xbox News Leaks!
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                    -* Sony Shows New Wireless Laptop *-
                  -* Faults Found In Web Reporter's Story *-
                -* Microsoft, Massachusetts Go After Spammers! *-




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->From the Editor's Keyboard              "Saying it like it is!"
   """""""""""""""""""""""""""
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Another week has flown by! I look forward to the weekend, but it appears
that we're going to have another wet one - the fourth one in a row. I
actually mowed the lawn during the week, just in case. The first
freshly-cut grass smell experience of the year! However, I'd like to see a
dry and sunny weekend so that I can get some work done outside in the yard.
The gardens are beckoning! So, while I ponder what I'm going to do with
those gardens, I'll let you get started on the rest of this week's issue.

Until next time...


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                    New XaAES Development Snapshot
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GokMasE has announced:

A new development snapshot of XaAES has been made available on the
un-official XaAES page. More than anything, this update offers really good
stability. In addition to that, you could also expect:

* Scroll lists has been implemented, used internally for eg. the XaAES
"about.." window as well as the file selector.

* File selector can now have "tree view" style. The contents of the current
dir can also be presented in real-time, as loaded.

* Menu bar handling has been bug-fixed. Both a problem with a visual glitch
as well as a stability issue has been cured.

* Code to handle window widgets has been reworked, as has the window
manager. The latter has been prepared for possible future extensions
regarding appearance settings.

* Setting AES window borders to a value of >=4 will result in a 3d-style
border being drawn. Expect better configurability regarding these things
further down the road.

* Keyboard combos should work much more reliably now. Changes has been made to both kernel and XaAES.

URL: http://xaaes.atariforge.net/

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I've got to be honest with you... there's very little going on in the newsgroup this week. It's like everyone took some time off and did yard work or something this week.

Now, normally I'd take the opportunity to hammer at you with my views of why the world is going to hell in a handbasket, but I'm going to resist the temptation. Why? Good question. Often, after a week like I've been having, you kind of feel like you're in "Bizarro World" and everything is going to happen exactly the opposite of the way logic would dictate.

So anyway, we've established that I'm having a bad week, there aren't a lot of messages in the NewsGroup, and the world is going to hell in a handbasket. (Okay, okay, I snuck that one in there)

It's times like this when I go into my computer room, now loaded with the jetsam and flotsam of 11 years of not having any place else to put things, and sit down at my 1040 or TT and just... ummm... "do stuff". You know the kind of thing... nothing earth-shattering or even marginally important in the grand scheme of things, but just something to help me relax. Hey, it's better than diving to the bottom of a bottle or climbing the stairs of a belltower with a carbine, right?

Anyway, it's times like these that I like to relax and sort of get lost in my own personal history. Now some of us still use our Atari computers daily, and some use them slightly less. But even more important than how often we see that familiar green desktop is the memories of "the good times". I made a lot of very good friends while learning about my Atari computers, and I'm proud to say that most of those people remain friends today.

You might have noticed that I made mention of the "green desktop"... Yeah, I've used MagiC, Geneva/NeoDesk, and even VDOS-ProQueue, but even though each of those improve on the original, they're still variations on a theme. Nothing says "ST" to me like that green desktop with the simple drop-down menus. A purist, you say? Well, maybe. But just seeing that familiar screen brings back not only memories, but a comforting sort of familiarity. We all need that from time to time, don't you think?

Well, let's get to the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
====================================

Mille Babic posts this interesting bit:

"Well, never thought about it, but then one day I did.
I just connected a Higarte Pocket LAN adapter to a little
and cheap D-LINK DWL-900AP+ Wireless LAN Access point
unit.

I re-configure the D-LINK to become a Wireless client
instead of work as a access point in the inbuild software.

The D-LINK with a IP of 192.168.0.7 and the STF with
192.168.0.8 then worked as two clients.

Of course I need and have a router with WLAN D-LINK DI-
614+, this router then talk wireless with the D-LINK unit
I connected with the STF, but...

...I can now move my 1997 ATARI around in my flat and
always have Internet on it. :-)

This particular STF have TOS2, 4MB RAM and an internal
IDE disk with 240 MB, so I can use several Internet apps
and with its SM124 monitor it's not a big deal to move
around from my kitchen to living room or elsewhere at
home.

Nice, eh? A Classic ATARI with WLAN."

Peter Feddersen tells Mille:

"Super Cool! I must try this!"

Lonny Pursell adds:

"You got me beat on the age of the system.
My TT030 has been wireless for a year or so with a d-link dwl-810.
it's also good storm protection should the lightening ever hit the
incoming cable."

Mille tells Lonny:

"But the lightening comes from above? and hits antennas
first? <*joke*>

oops, my STF is ten more years older then I wrote (what
did I thinking about). It should of course be ATARI 1987
STF.

well, I also own two Falcon machines and do use a
LocalTalk-cable between them, one of them have a LAN
adapter to connect LAN and Internet. I thought one day I
will install FreeMiNT on one of them but I only see much
work with it, ahead. Maybe it's easy, but, but..."

Janez Valant adds:

"Installing FreeMiNT is easy, as FreeMiNT is kernel only :) But
installing EasyMiNT distribution is also not hard, just take time. Its
basically just sit and wait procedure...

I used cable modem with TT from 1998. Interesting part is, that TT is
equipped with Riebl ethernet card, MiNT and it was running as internet
(ftp and www) server and as gateway machine (mintnet and ip
masquerading) for my Falcon (PLIPed to TT) and MST (midi net). Except
Falcon, all is dated 1991 or less, so LAN with ethernet on genuine
Atari hardware :) PLIP is not that bad, after i installed CT2 on
Falcon, speed went up to 120kb/s in good days, but it was around
80-90kb/s constantly (kilobytes, not kilobits)."

Hallvard Tangeraas asks for help in upgrading his MegaSTE's floppy
drive:

"As I have a Mega STe I know that it has support for HD floppy drives.
Unfortunately mine is an early Mega STe, so it doesn't have support for
out of the box, and thus needs to be upgraded.

I followed the thread a few weeks ago about this very same issue, but as
usual it escalated into a discussion about the WD-1772/AJAX disk
controller issue. However, I did understand that what I need is a
differently pre-programmed GAL chip (location U-407).

Is it possible to copy GAL chips? If so, is anyone with a MegaSTe and
this GAL chip willing to program a blank GAL chip for me with that data
on it?

It's been several years since I looked into this issue, but I do seem to
recall that there was more to it than just changing the GAL. Some
soldering perhaps? Other chip replacements?"

'Coda' tells Hallvard:

"I did have an AJAX lying around, so before I upgraded my drive to HD, I
first swapped the controller chip out. Everything worked fine, and as a
test I put the WD1772-02-02 back in, and it worked fine also. SO...
Ajax not required. I still have the AJAX in the drawer as a spare, and
the MegaSTe is still fine whether using DD or HD disks. I do have TOS
2.06 though, and I can't remember what GAL version I have.
Its not possible to copy GAL's as far as I am aware, but I am sure the
code for this GAL is available on the net somewhere."

'Tim' adds:

"I also have a early Mega STE1. It came with TOS 2.05 and a 720k
floppy. It also has the DMA sound bug. I did check and I have the
WD-1772 in it but I should also check to see what GAL I have. Where is
it at and near? I upgraded it to 4MB and TOS 2.06, and wish to install
a Epson SMD 300 drive I have sitting here (Which is a exact drop in
replacement) I have not tried it, what happens when the GAL needs to
be replaced? Does it not work at all or does it work but has

problems?"

Hallvard replies:

"DMA *sound* bug? Never heard of it.
I know that some early STe (not Mega STe) machines were equipped with a
faulty DMA chip which caused hard-drive problems, but didn't know that
this also affected Mega STe machines. Or are you referring to something
else?"

Tim tells Hallvard:

"The chip is called the GST Shifter, if you have the one with part
#C301712-001 you have the buggy revision!

Check it out for yourself:

http://groups-beta.google.com/groups?q=c301712 "

David Leaver jumps in and asks:

"Are not two issues getting confused here? Upgrading the disk drive is
normally a matter of a new drive, and AJAX chip and setting the
configuration switch which enables HD.

The GAL is required for addressing a 68881/2 if you fit one."

Hallvard replies:

"Are you referring to the jumper pad (or is it a DIL switch?)?
If so, the only thing it does is enable an additional "High density"
format option if using the TOS 2.06 desktop formatter.

On the ST/STe it's more than just getting a new drive. Most drives have
to be slightly modified (I've done it myself, and documented it), and
additional electronic circuitry needs to be added to make it switch
between HD and DD modes.

On the Mega STe however I'm not entirely sure, which is why I've posted
here. I believe I've heard that you can simply replace the existing 720
Kb disk drive with a HD disk drive (it's unclear if this means a
standard PC type disk drive, or a special "Atari" adapted drive,
which was available from Atari dealers at the time) and you're done (as
long as the right GAL is available, and of course an AJAX (or just the
plain old WD-1772-02-02 if this isn't going to turn into one of those
1772 vs. AJAX discussions again;-)).
From others I've heard that you might have to solder a wire or two
somewhere inside the Mega STe, but I might be confusing things for all
I know.

Yes, that upgrade needs a GAL as well.
But the Mega STe does indeed use a pre-programmed GAL for high-density
disk drive support. It came with newer Mega STe machines, but not
mine."

Well folks, that's about it for this week. Tune in again next week, same
time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying
when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

                              =~=~=~=

->In This Week's Gaming Section - New Xbox Details Leak Out!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Shining Force Neo!
                                    New Need for Speed!
                                    And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

                New Xbox Details Leak Out Ahead of Launch

Pictures and details of Microsoft Corp.'s newest video game console have
leaked out - from an official party thrown by the company as part of a
planned unveiling later this week on MTV.

Based on pictures and eyewitness accounts that made the rounds of the
Internet over the weekend, the console will be known as "Xbox 360."

The console is mostly white and designed to stand on one end, will feature
a wireless controller and also a remote control that appears to handle
multimedia functions like audio and video playback, according to various
online forums that track consumer technologies.

The console's power button has "skins," customizable appearances that can
apparently be added by the user. Other peripheral devices that appeared in
some of the shots include a headset and a kind of Web camera. The pictures
first appeared prominently on the tech Web site Engadget.com.

Microsoft would not confirm any of the information circulating on the Web,
saying that "everything you are reading about at this point is buzz and
speculation."

Plenty of details remain to be revealed, including when Xbox 360 will be
shipped, what it will cost, what will be included, what games will be
available at launch and whether it will be compatible with games for the
original Xbox.

It was not clear if all of those questions will be answered on Thursday's
MTV broadcast, or even next week at the news conference Microsoft will hold

at E3, the annual games industry trade show in Los Angeles.

Microsoft said in early April it would unveil its new console on MTV, a change in tactics in an industry where new hardware is always revealed at trade shows closed to the public. Microsoft said at the time it wanted to break that mold and drum up public enthusiasm for its new machine.

That Microsoft planned a new console this year was perhaps the worst-kept secret in the industry though, as game publishers have said over the last few months they expect a new console this holiday season.

The original Xbox launched a year after the debut of market leader Sony Corp.'s PlayStation 2, and that head-start proved invaluable to Sony. Early on in the Xbox's life Microsoft promised that they would not be beaten to market with their next console.

Sony is expected to offer some details about the PlayStation 3 at E3 next week, though the console itself is not expected until sometime in 2006.

Information Leaks Too Fast for Microsoft

The difficulty of keeping secrets in the instantaneous age of the Internet and digital cameras should come as no surprise to the world's leading technology company, Microsoft Corp. But this week, the behemoth software maker apparently was caught off guard.

Microsoft intends to preview its new gaming console, dubbed Xbox 360, to the world on Thursday via an MTV special. The Redmond, Wash.-based company invited 200 people to attend the Los Angeles taping and asked them not to reveal what they saw until the show's broadcast.

Some of the attendees apparently couldn't resist and snapped photographs that have been widely circulated on the Web. (Note to Microsoft's publicity department: the next time you decide to give 200 strangers a sneak peek at a product you should probably insist participants check their cameras at the door.)

The photos reveal that Xbox 360 is slightly concave, features an oversized power button, wireless headset and DVD remote.

Microsoft isn't the only company contending ever more frequently with leaks about upcoming products.

In December, Apple Computer Inc. sued 25 unnamed individuals who allegedly leaked product information.

It is unknown whether Microsoft plans any legal action. The company has refused to comment.

Next-generation Gaming Consoles to Dominate E3 Show

When the video game industry gathers in Los Angeles next week for its annual trade show, everyone from the most important game developers to technophiles will have just one thing on their minds: new toys.

Sony Corp., Microsoft Corp. and Nintendo Co. Ltd. are expected to show off their next-generation gaming consoles to developers at the annual Electronics Entertainment Expo, or E3, as all three companies seek to entrench themselves deeper into living rooms with advanced computing, graphics and multimedia features.

"This really is a show that's going to be hugely focused on hardware," said Ankarino Lara, a director at online gaming magazine GameSpot.

Microsoft beat Sony and Nintendo to the punch after unveiling details of the next version of its Xbox, called Xbox 360, nearly a week before E3's official start.

The world's largest software maker said the Xbox 360 will be on store shelves this year, just ahead of the U.S. holiday season in late November, with launches in Japan and Europe coming shortly thereafter.

Microsoft's new white-and-silver concave console will feature three IBM microprocessors to deliver powerful computing and advanced graphics, as well as a detachable 20-gigabyte hard drive and the ability to customize the machine's front panel with detachable face-plates.

Sony is expected to reveal more details of its PlayStation 3 console on Monday, which it has kept under tight wraps.

The third version of the top-selling video game machine is expected to include the new "Cell" microprocessor developed with International Business Machines Corp. and Toshiba Corp. and also support Sony's next-generation high-capacity format for DVD discs.

Nintendo, which so far has said very little about its successor to the GameCube, code-named "Revolution," is expected to position its console as pure gaming machine rather than an entertainment hub.

Sony's PS3 and Nintendo's Revolution are widely expected to debut sometime in 2006.

But the organizers of E3 say that, all the hype about the hardware aside, the show always ends up being about games.

"Hardware is great, hardware is exciting, hardware is newsworthy, but the heart of this business is about software," said Doug Lowenstein, president of the Entertainment Software Association, which organizes E3 every year.

Electronics Arts Inc., the world's biggest video game publisher, with enough clout to overshadow even the hardware makers, is expected to showcase major new games based on movies such as "The Godfather" and "James Bond's From Russia with Love" as well as the latest installments of its military hit "Medal of Honor" and book-based "Harry Potter" series.

Activision Inc. said on Thursday that it will unveil two new versions of its "Call of Duty" war-based games as well as a new version of its hit "Spider-Man" games.

Industry watchers are also waiting to see if Take-Two Interactive Software Inc. will disclose any details of a new "Grand Theft Auto" to follow the success of "Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas," the latest iteration of the criminal adventure series.

Also highly anticipated is the next installment of Nintendo's hugely popular "Legend of Zelda" series for the GameCube.

Sony and Nintendo are also pushing game developers to flesh out their offerings for the companies' latest handheld gaming machines, the PSP and DS, both of which launched in the past year.

Online gaming is also gaining more prominence, as more and more players hook up their machines to the Internet to compete and play games with each other online.

Microsoft is betting that more than half of Xbox 360 users will be playing online, while Sony is expected to provide details on how it will catch up to Microsoft's lead in the online console gaming arena.

SEGA Announces Shining Force Neo For Playstation 2

SEGA of America, Inc. today announced Shining Force Neo, the next chapter in the popular Shining Force series, developed exclusively for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system. Shining Force Neo is a fast-paced action-adventure featuring a dramatic, character-driven story and a high-gloss anime aesthetic.

Developed by SEGA Studios, Shining Force Neo is a tale of knights and magic, set in a world that has been popular with RPG fans for nearly 15 years. Max, a young fighter training for knighthood, has been tasked by his father to close monster portals that have opened up in peaceful villages. With the help of 11 friends, Max's quest will take him all over the world, and through his heroic acts, he will ultimately become a legendary hero.

"Shining Force Neo reinforces our strategy of keeping SEGA's classic intellectual properties fresh and exciting to both new players and long-time fans," said Yosuke Moriya, SEGA of America spokesperson. "PlayStation 2 has become home to many of the current generation's greatest RPGs, and we're pleased to bring the Shining Force series to the platform for the first time."

Deep character customization makes up the strategic component of Shining Force Neo, which allows players to turn Max into a powerful sorcerer or a mighty warrior. More than 150 stat-improving items, called Force Arts, can be equipped for an unprecedented level of specialization. Real-time combat creates a deeper sense of personal involvement in battles, and the presence of more than 90 enemies on screen at once ratchets up the grand scale that the Shining Force games are known for. And the fast-paced action never lets up: a single play-through of the game clocks in at nearly 35 hours. For those still addicted after the credits roll, an advanced dungeon unlocks when the final boss is toppled.

Shining Force Neo is a long, satisfying adventure, packed with more action than any Shining Force title before it. The game is slated to ship in Fall 2005.

Key Product Features:

    * A well recognized game universe. The game features character types
      and enemies that will be immediately familiar to fans.
    * Gorgeous anime by Studio 4C. This notable animation team is made up

of former Studio Ghibli (Princess Mononoke, Spirited Away) staff.
* Full voice acting throughout the game. Engaging vocal performances
  strengthen the story's emotional impact.
* Eleven unique characters join your party during the adventure. An
  involved story features nearly a dozen characters willing to take up
  Max's cause.
* More than 90 enemies will simultaneously attack Max and his party.
  Massive warfare gives fans the epic feel they expect from a Shining
  Force game.

EA Ships Need for Speed Underground 2 for the Nintendo DS

Electronic Arts announced that Need for Speed Underground 2 for the
Nintendo DS handheld game system has shipped to retail stores nationwide.
Need for Speed Underground 2 gives gamers a new way to take on the
underground tuner racing scene with exclusive features and gameplay only
available on the Nintendo DS.

Players will jump right into the action with numerous underground races
happening all around town. Gamers will cruise through a variety of tracks,
rack up enough points to customize their rides with visual and performance
upgrades and defeat the top rivals to rule the underground streets. The
action doesn't stop there. Players can also master numerous mini-games to
unlock special upgrades or even humiliate their friends with their street
racing skills via the four-player wireless mode.

In addition, using the handheld's unique touch screen technology, gamers
can now create an unlimited number of custom vinyl designs to apply to
their vehicles for that truly unique style to flaunt on the streets. For
that extra boost during races, players also can use the touch-sensitive
panel controls to manage their nitrous usage as they make their way to the
finish line.

Developed in Vancouver, B.C. by EA Canada, Need for Speed Underground 2 is
rated "E" for Everyone by the ESRB and has an MSRP of $39.99.

Rockstar Games Announces Bully For Xbox And Playstation 2

Rockstar Games, the world-renowned publishing label of Take-Two Interactive
Software, Inc. is proud to announce Bully for the PlayStation 2 computer
entertainment system and Xbox video game system from Microsoft. Bully takes
the Rockstar tradition of groundbreaking, innovative, original gameplay and
humorous tongue-in-cheek storytelling to an entirely new setting: the
schoolyard. Bully is the brutally funny debut title from Rockstar Vancouver
and is expected to hit retail shelves in October 2005. Bully will be shown
behind closed doors in the Rockstar booth at E3 (324 South Hall).

"We are really excited about the first title to be developed by our
Rockstar Vancouver studio," said Sam Houser, President of Rockstar Games.
"We fought hard to keep this title under wraps for ages and I am thrilled
that we can finally unveil it to people at E3."

As a troublesome schoolboy, you'll laugh and cringe as you stand up to
bullies, get picked on by teachers, play pranks on malicious kids, win or

lose the girl, and ultimately learn to navigate the obstacles of the
fictitious reform school, Bullworth Academy.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online   -   Online Users Growl & Purr!
  """"""""""""""""""""

                Keeper of the Game: Cultural Icon Atari 2600
                    Is Back on the Screen in Hub Tourney

The original Atari 2600 was neither the first nor the best video game
console to hit the market.

And yet, 28 years later, after the Intellivision, ColecoVision and Ataris
5200 and 7800 have come and gone - replaced by Nintendo and Sega, then by
Sony's PlayStation2, Microsoft's XBox and Nintendo's GameCube - it all
comes back to the Atari 2600.

Visit any major retailer and amid the latest, greatest games you'll find
new plug-and-play gadgets such as the Atari Flashback or Namco's 5-in-1
systems that whisk you back to simpler days and simpler graphics. This
week's episode of "CSI: Miami" featured the Atari 2600 as part of a high
school reunion murder. And the Atari symbol and name pop up on T-shirts and
in band names.

What is it about the Atari? "Atari was the first home game that most people
have," said Clinton McClung, program director of the Coolidge Corner
Theatre in Brookline. "That's the one I remember kids down the block had
before anyone else."

McClung, 34, fits the old-school video game demographic. So when he saw his
employees holding gaming parties, the nostalgia took hold and begat the
Atari 2600 Video Game Festival, which begins at midnight Saturday at his
cinema.

The auditoriums will become big-screen Atari tournament sites, with players
facing off in timed contests. A year of free Blockbuster Video rentals goes
to the grand champion.

A screening of "The Wizard," the 1989 video game movie starring Fred
Savage, follows at 1 a.m. (although really, "The Last Starfighter" or
"Tron" would've been more apt choices).

To host the tourney, though, McClung would need actual Atari systems -
leading him out West to Chandler, Ariz., and Joe Cody, who runs
Atari2600.com, the largest online supplier of Atari games, consoles and
accessories.

Cody, 38, got involved in the Atari business in 1996 and left a career at
Boeing to pursue Atari2600.com full time in 1999. His business generates
100,000 hits to the Web site each month and registers six-figure sales
annually.

"It's a cultural icon," Cody said of his bread-and-butter product.
"It's at least a significant part of the collective consciousness.
Intellivision and Coleco followed. Both of them were superior to the
2600, but that's not always the most important thing."

For collectors, the biggest Atari prizes are the games released just as the
market bottomed out, because so few were sold back then. Cody sold a "Video
Life" cartridge and manual for $1,900. But the rarest game, "Air Raid," has
only four known copies and can fetch $4,000 for even the loose cartridge.

For McClung and his peers, however, the value is purely sentimental. Even
thinking about Atari gets him talking in excited tones. "It's incredibly
fun to play 'Combat' and blow up your best friend just with fake tanks," he
said. "The great thing about Atari is that the good games are really good
and the bad games are really bad."

The beeps and clicks of video games sometimes have a harmony all their own.
And two video game composers have decided to test that theory with a
full-fledged multimedia concert tour that has orchestras and choirs
translating the soundtracks of classic games from "Donkey Kong" to "Final
Fantasy."

Each "Video Games Live" concert includes not just live music, but also
laser shows and actual game playing with handpicked audience members. The
tour kicks off July 6 at the Hollywood Bowl with the Los Angeles
Philharmonic. A date at the Tweeter Center in Mansfield is in the works
but not yet announced.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Power Outage Hits EBay

A power outage at one of EBay's major hosting facilities in the San
Francisco area hit the popular online auction service late Monday, it says.

The outage resulted in the site becoming unavailable, according to a notice
posted on a secondary server just after 9 p.m. PDT Monday.

About an hour later, a second message was posted detailing the reason for
the site failure and letting users know that parts of the site were again
available.

"We will keep you updated on progress, and we appreciate your patience," it
concluded.

It's not the first time EBay has suffered such problems, although the
Monday outage isn't nearly the company's worst. The site has in the past
been unavailable for periods of up to 22 hours, according to EBay's most

recent financial report.

"Any unscheduled interruption in our services results in an immediate, and possibly substantial, loss of revenues," it says in the report.

Interruptions can also cause a delay in the roll-out of new features because engineering staff are otherwise occupied dealing with the site trouble and outages can also harm the business of eBay's customers, it says.

EBay had 147 million registered users across its U.S. and international sites at the end of March this year. Of those users, 60.5 million were counted as active users.

AOL Jumps Into Free E-Mail Business

Its subscription business in decline, America Online Inc. is launching yet another product on the open Web: a free, ad-supported e-mail service tied to its instant-messaging platform.

Users of AOL Instant Messenger will be able to send and receive mail with "aim.com" addresses using their existing AIM screen names.

Initially, users will need the latest version of AIM software, available as a "beta" test download for Windows computers beginning Wednesday. Ultimately, they'll be able to send and receive mail from any Web browser.

Each account comes with 2 gigabytes of storage - comparable with Google Inc.'s Gmail and more generous than the free offerings from Yahoo Inc. and Microsoft Corp.'s Hotmail and even AOL's flagship subscription service.

And unlike AOL's main accounts, which keep new messages for 27 days and messages already read for up to a week unless users actively save them, AIM mail never expires.

AIM mail will also incorporate a few features unique to AOL until now: The ability to check whether AOL and AIM recipients have opened a message and to delete an unopened message from the recipients' inbox (This won't work with e-mail sent to users of other services).

The Web-based interface will also have drag-and-drop capabilities, allowing users to sort mail without having to check multiple boxes and hit a "move" button.

"It's not clear what the demand is for yet another free e-mail product, but this is certainly a very competitive offering," Jupiter Research analyst David Card said.

One key difference between the AOL and AIM mail offerings will be in ad placement: When checking mail, an ad appears on the bottom if you have the paid AOL account but more prominently on top if you use the free AIM service.

As AOL breaks from its historical "walled-garden" strategy of exclusivity and makes more of its offerings free to non-subscribers, it risks furthering declines in paid subscriptions.

In the United States, AOL lost more than 500,000 subscribers in the first

quarter of 2005 and about 5 million since its peak of 26.7 million in September 2002.

Card said he doubts AOL will market the AIM mail service heavily to its existing paid subscribers. Rather, he said, AIM mail is a way to keep AIM users from leaving the AIM environment - and its ads - to use Gmail, Yahoo or Hotmail.

Roy Ben-Yoseph, AOL's director of communication and client products, said the AOL subscription service offers much more than e-mail - it offers the ability to restrict access to kids and to share online photos, to name a few features.

"There are clearly different people that the products target," he said. "I definitely believe there is an important need for the old service, and members will continue to stay with AOL."

Risky or not, AOL sees little choice but to expand its free offerings if it wants to tap the growing market for Internet advertising, estimated at $9.6 billion in the United States last year, a 33 percent increase from $7.3 billion in 2003.

The company is trying to create in AIM a one-stop communications platform that includes text chats, audio and video - all free and opportunities for AOL to sell more ads. AOL recently expanded its Web journal offerings to AIM users and is testing next-generation software to better integrate the various components.

According to comScore Media Metrix, AIM is the most popular IM service in the United States, with 21.7 million active users. Yahoo has 19.3 million and MSN 14.8 million.

This week's beta of the new AIM software will accommodate 250 users on buddy lists, an increase of 50. AOL expects to raise the cap to 400 by the time the final version comes out, expected in early June.

At that time, users will be able to check AIM mail from any browser by visiting AIM.com. Checking AIM mail through AOL.com is expected when AOL launches its new portal later in the summer.

                        AOL Keynoter Talks 'Web 2.0'

After a full day of pre-game activities, America Online Inc.'s Tina Sharkey kicked off the ninth annual Connections Conference in San Francisco with a general glimpse of the online service's future plans.

Sharkey, AOL's senior vice president of network & community programming, briefly mentioned the company's not-so-secret plans to relaunch its Web site, aol.com, later this summer. The site, which has mostly been a portal to AOL's services, will turn into a full-fledged content site, paid for by on-site advertising. It will also be home for the new AIM e-mail system, which was announced Wednesday.

She also briefly touched on VOD (video on demand) and how it will play a vital role in the revamped AOL.

As for how consumers will react to VOD over the Web, Sharkey said it will

be a completely natural delivery system for the medium.

"Much like Google is a great way to find things on eBay, the Web will be the best way to find video on other platforms or on the Web," she said.

The rest of the speeches focused on AOL's determination to cater to the new Internet user. Sharkey said it's no longer a place to "log on" but a place where people already are-all day, checking the weather, news, e-mail and in general, managing their lives.

"[This is] not my mom's Internet," Sharkey said. "It's changing, and it's changing because we're looking at the share-shifting-the time people are looking at TV, reading a magazine, listening to the radio-they're not replacing each other; they're coming together."

Sharkey gave a brief overview of "a day in the life of AOL," to show how much Internet users access its services on a daily basis. Some of the statistics provided said that 53 percent of the Web audience visits the AOL network, almost 400 million e-mails are sent across the network, and 1.38 billion instant messages are sent using the AIM (AOL Instant Messenger) service.

These numbers might not be surprising, Sharkey said, but new elements have been added to the list of late, notably that in one day 20 million pictures have been shared over the AOL network, 560,000 blogs have been updated, and 1.8 million poll votes have been cast. And then there are AOL Music Sessions videos, like the one from rap artist 50 Cent, which was streamed 6.1 million times upon its initial debut.

"MTV would dream for numbers like that," Sharkey added.

Sharkey then talked about how Web users have started to control their own programming, especially the new "Generation C," short for Generation Content. This young group of users has created its own content online, through blogs, through sharing images, and by creating personalized "away" messages on AIM.

As for the Web's future, Sharkey said AOL will be keeping an eye on what's happening in real time, listening to what people talk about and trying to make everything look and feel alive.

"It's a people Web," she said. "We will be watching what they do, how they share and how viral it all becomes."

Trojan Targets AIM

A Trojan continued to spread Monday among America Online instant messaging clients, and installs its backdoor on the infected PC when trusting users click on a link within the line "Check out this" or "i thought youd wanna see this" from a buddy on their AIM contact list.

Dubbed "Oscarbot" by McAfee and "Doyorg" by Symantec, the Trojan doesn't spread automatically when users download and run the file linked in the instant message. Instead, it opens a port and listens for instructions on IRC (Internet Relay Channel); the attacker must specifically order each infected machine to start spreading.

It propagates by sending the same message to every buddy in the system's AOL Instant Messenger client's address book.

The primary damage down by the Trojan is the backdoor component, which can later be used by the attacker to upload software of his choice to the compromised PC. Such machines are typically added to hackers' botnets and used as spam proxies or machines to launch denial of service(DoS) attacks.

Up-to-date anti-virus software should catch the Trojan - which has been circulating for just over a week - and will delete it on infected systems. Users can best protect themselves by not clicking on links delivered via IM, nor download software from those URLs, even if the message comes from a trusted friend.

Sony Introduces New Wireless Laptop

Sony Corp on Tuesday introduced the first mass-market laptop with built-in cellular technology for accessing the Internet over a wireless connection.

The new Vaio T350 notebook, with list prices starting at $2,199, is equipped with an internal modem based on the EDGE technology deployed across Cingular Wireless' national network.

While many cell companies in other countries offer EDGE service, the Sony laptops are only configured to connect through an account with Cingular, which is owned by SBC Communications Inc and BellSouth Corp. Weighing about 3 pounds without the power adapter, the new Vaios also offer short-range wireless capabilities using Wi-Fi and Bluetooth technologies. A special dashboard lets users toggle between the different wireless options.

Other features include a built-in optical drive that can burn DVDs and CDs.

The Vaio T350 cannot connect with the much speedier UMTS technology that Cingular offers in six U.S. cities and plans to roll out nationally this year and next. Users would either need to continue to use the EDGE network or purchase an external UMTS card for the computer.

EDGE offers connection speeds about twice as fast as a dial-up modem. Cingular says the version of UMTS it is deploying transmits data at an average rate of between 400 and 700 kilobits per second - on par with entry-level broadband over a DSL or cable TV line as well as the EV-DO service being deployed by Verizon Wireless.

Sony said it is interested in deploying laptops with the UMTS technology but that no decision has been made.

As part of the relationship, Sony is selling Cingular's data plans to customers who buy the new laptops.

The data plans from Cingular are priced at $80 a month for unlimited national access or $50 for 50 megabits worth of data usage per month. Sony is offering a free month for users who sign a one-year contract and two free months with a two-year contract.

Worldwide 'Spam Gang' Is Shut Down

A Massachusetts judge Wednesday ordered what authorities are calling one of the world's largest "spam gangs" to shut down.

The move followed a lawsuit filed Wednesday by the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office, which alleges the operation broke the federal anti-spam law, "CAN-SPAM," enacted in 2003.

The nine-month investigation, which was assisted by Microsoft, uncovered a worldwide operation that sends out hundreds of millions of illegal spam pitches a month, as well as advertising for fraudulent products, said Massachusetts Attorney General Tom Reilly.

It was another example of Microsoft teaming up with law enforcement to crack down on illegal e-mail activities, which Microsoft sees as a threat to consumer confidence in its products. Spam accounts for at least 50 percent of e-mail, by some estimates.

The targeted organization is "one of the largest spam gangs in this country, if not the world," Reilly said.

Reilly is charging nine individuals with engaging in deceptive acts, including sending unsolicited e-mail, operating online businesses that sell counterfeit prescription drugs, such as Viagra knockoffs, bootleg software and porn, as well as operating unlicensed online mortgage brokerage services.

"This is one of the largest and most sophisticated operations we have seen," said Microsoft General Counsel Brad Smith.

The group used domain names registered in Monaco, Australia and France, and servers in China, South Korea, Brazil and Taiwan.

"They really used the Internet to build a global, virtual business," Smith said. ``They hired affiliates to send e-mail on their behalf and put in place fulfillment houses. If you bought Viagra from them, they would have it shipped to you from someone in India."

In summer 2004, Microsoft set up "trap" e-mail accounts on its MSN Hotmail Internet service - and captured at least 45,000 spam messages believed to have originated with the Massachusetts-based ring.

The partnership of Microsoft and the Massachusetts attorney general was a case of one-time courtroom combatants working together. Reilly opposed the 2001 antitrust settlement between Microsoft and the U.S. Justice Department long after other states had dropped their opposition.

"Just a year ago, we were sitting on opposites sides of the courtroom," Smith said. ``It's another positive step for our company and our relationships with government officials."

Microsoft's campaign against spammers and operators of "phishing" sites, which try to trick unsuspecting Internet users into handing over personal financial information, is now a part of the company's business strategy, he said.

"The reality is, it has the potential to affect every part of the computing business," Smith said. "It has the potential to undermine customer confidence in our technologies."

Lawmakers Set Their Sights on Spyware

Senators George Allen (R-Virginia) and Gordon Smith (R-Oregon) introduced
new anti-spyware legislation Wednesday that focuses on improving
enforcement of existing laws rather than creating new ones

The new anti-spyware bill would significantly increase civil and criminal
penalties for spyware distributors and creators, according to Allen. He
says that illegal profits from spyware should be seized and given to
improve law enforcement, as is currently the case under federal drug laws
with regard to profits from illegal drug sales.

Allen announced his bill, which has not yet officially been named, at a
meeting of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation committee. It
follows the SPY BLOCK bill, which was introduced last year and then
reintroduced in the Senate in March. SPY BLOCK aims to introduce new rules
to protect consumers from the growing spyware problem. Allen says that his
bill will give law enforcement more resources to go after spyware makers
under existing laws and will add stiff new penalties.

Right now, Allen's bill competes with SPY BLOCK. Theoretically, only one of
the two bills should make it to the Senate floor for a vote. But the two
bills may be combined into a single compromise bill before either moves
forward.

SPY BLOCK and Allen's new bill each would create a national standard that
would supersede current state anti-spyware laws.

Whichever bill moves forward, senators and witnesses at Wednesday's hearing
agreed that spyware is a vast and expensive threat to consumers and the
economy, and that it needs to be addressed.

"Spyware is sort of like someone walking around your house invisibly," says
Senator Barbara Boxer (D-California). "It harms consumers, damages
computers, and undermines the privacy that people expect and deserve."
Boxer is a cosponsor of SPY BLOCK.

Boxer says that spyware generates over $2 billion a year for its creators
and distributors. She and many senators also referred to an AOL survey from
last year that found spyware on 80 percent of the computers it examined.

Privacy and advertising industry groups backed the need for stronger
enforcement. Ari Schwartz, associate director of the Center for Democracy
and Technology, says that lax pursuit of lawbreakers today casts doubt on
tomorrow's laws.

"How do we go about enforcing these new laws that we're going to put on, if
we can't enforce today's laws?" he asks.

J. Trevor Hughes, executive director of the Network Advertising Initiative,
says that the online advertising industry has a deep self-interest in
defeating spyware because it erodes public trust in e-commerce. Better
prosecution would be effective in the fight against spyware makers due to
the deterrent effect of seeing people "come out of courthouses with
raincoats over their heads," he says.

In response to a question from Senator Conrad Burns (R-Montana) about information available to consumers, Schwartz said that he recommends reading mainstream computer magazines such as PC World to learn about spyware and how to fight it.

Burns has worked with Allen in the past to bring the stronger penalties and law enforcement provisions from the new bill into SPY BLOCK, and would still like to do so, according to Burns's spokesperson, Jennifer O'Shea.

Now that both bills have been introduced, the committee will decide when and whether to send either bill to the full Senate for a vote.

Microsoft To Offer Anti-virus Software, Service

Microsoft Corp., the world's largest software maker, unveiled on Thursday plans to launch a computer subscription service that would include anti-virus and security updates for personal computers.

The Redmond, Washington-based software giant said it will initially distribute the new service, called "Windows OneCare" among its employees this week and will offer a trial, or beta, service for PCs running Windows later this year. Users would pay a yearly fee for the subscription.

In addition to providing anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall protection, Windows OneCare will also include tools to keep PCs maintained for optimal performance and back up key data.

Microsoft did not say how much it expected to charge for the service, which had been expected for a while by the security software community.

Microsoft acquired anti-virus technology from GeCAD Software Srl., a Romanian software company, in 2003 to develop its own software. A major security-focused update to Windows XP, called Service Pack 2, was delivered last year.

Such efforts have hit the shares of major security software vendors. McAfee Inc.'s shares are down 13 percent so far this year while Symantec Corp.'s stock has declined 28 percent in the same period.

"We're designing the service so it will continually update and evolve over time," Ryan Hamlin, Microsoft's general manager of the Technology Care and Safety Group said in a statement.

Nearly all of the major anti-virus security programs are designed to be updated regularly over the Internet for a monthly or yearly fee, so that they can cope with new virus threats as they appear.

Windows XP Slims Down for Older PCs

Microsoft is readying a slimmed-down version of Windows XP for users who want to upgrade their Windows operating systems but not their PCs.

The software, code-named Eiger, will be based on Windows XP Professional with Service Pack 2 and is designed for server-centric computing

environments. It can run on a system with a Pentium II processor, 128MB of RAM, and a 500MB hard drive, says Barry Goffe, a group product manager at Microsoft.

"There is a set of customers who have old hardware and who want to try to eke a little more value out of that hardware," Goffe says.

The Eiger product is meant not for home users or small businesses but for large organizations that currently use older PCs with older versions of Windows, such as Windows 95, Windows 98, or Windows NT 4.0, Goffe says.

By upgrading, users will gain management features such as Active Directory and Group Policy Management. Also, the older Windows versions could be a security threat because Microsoft no longer provides patches for the operating systems. As Eiger is based on Windows XP, users will be able to plug security holes with patches supplied by Microsoft.

Eiger is being designed to run server-based applications; it won't run Office or line-of-business applications locally, Goffe says. Server-based applications can be reached through Microsoft's or third-party terminal services clients and mainframe terminal emulation, he says.

Eiger will also include Internet Explorer for access to Web-based applications and Windows Media Player, Goffe says.

For further manageability, Eiger will support Microsoft and third-party security and management products. For example, it will work with Microsoft's SMS (Systems Management Server) and WSUS (Windows Server Update Services) systems management and patching products.

"Customers are primarily concerned about security. They are looking for ways to provide a more secure infrastructure," Goffe says. "The best thing that they can do is to buy a new PC with Windows XP. However, there are customers who aren't in the position to buy a new PC."

Goffe has come across organizations in government, manufacturing, health care, and financial services that would be interested in Eiger, he says. For example, one school system with 200,000 PCs would rather spend money buying text books and paying teachers' salaries than buying new PCs, he says.

"For those customers, today there really isn't a good solution. They can't take Windows XP and run it on those old PCs. It won't work," he says. "So Eiger is designed specifically for those customers."

Microsoft has not yet decided when it will ship Eiger. The company plans to have a first beta test version ready later this year, and a technical preview version is being sent to a very small number of customers this week, Goffe says. Pricing has yet to be determined.

Over Half Of Online Adults Use Broadband At Home

Three quarters of U.S. adults go online, with more than half using broadband at home, a survey released Thursday showed.

The number of online adults as of April reached 163 million, a 4 percent increase over eight month ago, market researcher Harris Interactive said.

Fully 74 percent of adults are online at home, in the office, at school, the library or other location, a 1 percent increase over the summer of 2004. In 2000, 57 percent of U.S. adults were online.

But the most striking change was the increase in broadband use, Harris said. Fifty-four percent of online adults said they accessed the Internet over broadband at home, compared to 37 percent in December of 2003

The big jump in broadband penetration is good news for Internet companies, which can offer more advanced services, such as Internet telephony, web conferencing and photo and music sharing, that require higher bandwidths.

Harris, which based its findings on a telephone survey of more than 2,000 adults, said the increase in the number of people online was due to the rise in Internet access at locations other than at work and at home. Adults who are online at libraries, schools and other places rose to 21 percent from 17 percent in 2004.

Adults accessing the Internet at home and at work increased 1 percent and 2 percent, respectively, to 66 percent and 36 percent.

As Internet penetration rises, the demographic profile for Internet users is moving closing to that of the nation as a whole, Harris said. For example, 8 percent of people age 65 or older wer online, compared to 15 percent of all adults who are in that age category; and 16 percent have annual incomes of less than $25,000, compared to 21 percent of all U.S. adults.

Penetration, however, remains highest among younger and more affluent adults.

Faults Found in Online Reporter's Stories

An investigation over the sourcing and accuracy of news stories by a freelance journalist at a leading Internet news site concluded that the existence of dozens of people quoted in the articles could not be confirmed.

Wired News, which publishes some articles from Wired magazine, paid for the review of stories by one of its frequent contributors, Michelle Delio, 37, of New York City. It was expected to disclose results late Monday.

The review determined that dozens of people cited in articles by Delio primarily during the past 18 months could not be located, said one person familiar with the report's conclusions. This person said nearly all the people who were cited as sources and who could not be located had common names and occupations and were reported to be living in large metropolitan regions.

Wired News' editor in chief, Evan Hansen, confirmed those conclusions Monday. "I wouldn't dispute any of that," he said.

None of the information attributed to the disputed sources was considered significant. The disputed quotations typically supported details elsewhere in the articles.

Delio said Monday the investigation "concluded that my stories did not

contain fabricated news, that key information in all the stories checked out and that all primary sources were located." She said she regretted not keeping contact information for all her sources.

In a private e-mail Delio sent to Wired News executives last month and obtained by The Associated Press, she said she wanted to "present my side of this sad saga."

"I don't understand why my credibility and career is now hanging solely on finding minor sources that contributed color quotes to stories I filed months and years ago," she wrote. Delio said that among hundreds of articles she wrote for the organization, there "isn't one story that contains fabricated news."

Wired News and Wired Magazine are separately owned and do not share office space or staff, but Wired News publishes Wired Magazine's content online.

The review for Wired News was carried out by Adam Penenberg, a Wired News columnist who teaches journalism at New York University. Penenberg exposed fabricated articles in The New Republic by Stephen Glass in 1998 while Penenberg was a writer for Forbes.com. Glass was fired.

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